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Intelligence Memorandum

Military Aid To North Vietnam During 1970

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June 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM**MILITARY AID TO NORTH VIETNAM DURING 1970****Introduction**

1. During the past three years, military aid deliveries to North Vietnam have been on the decline. This memorandum presents estimates of the values and types of military equipment and munitions delivered to North Vietnam by its major Communist allies in 1970 and provides comparisons with deliveries in previous years. Finally, it discusses the reasons for reduced military deliveries as they relate to observed trends in North Vietnam's military activities. This memorandum is the third in a series of joint CIA-DIA studies of military aid deliveries to North Vietnam.

Discussion**Sources**

2. There is little direct evidence on the amount of foreign military aid delivered to North Vietnamese military forces, other than the documentary reports of weapons and ammunition received by North Vietnamese army units through Cambodia during the period December 1966 - April 1969. Estimates are based primarily on indirect evidence and a variety of sources. Changes in inventories of large military items, such as aircraft and naval craft, can be estimated from aerial photography within a fairly narrow margin of error. Estimated imports of small arms and ammunition are based on estimated expenditure rates plus estimated losses from Allied air and ground attacks. These estimates are subject to a wider margin of error than those based on photography. For example, were North Vietnam to undertake a major restocking program unrelated to the current level of battlefield expenditures, it would probably be many months before this would be reflected in our estimates, if ever. Production capabilities

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of the donor countries and [] captured equipment, when available, provide evidence on the source of military aid. The total values of military aid presented in this memorandum must be considered gross estimates of North Vietnam's military imports, but they provide the best available indications of the comparative levels of annual military imports during the past six years.

Military Deliveries During 1970

3. Military aid deliveries to North Vietnam during 1970 were valued at \$155 million, 1/ roughly 30% below the \$225 million in military aid received during 1969, bringing the cumulative value of military aid from 1954-70 to about \$2.3 billion, as shown in Table 1. The decline in military aid during 1970 reflects the reduction in imports of the more sophisticated and expensive varieties of military equipment. North Vietnam imported no jet fighter aircraft in 1970 and only 100 surface-to-air missiles. Imports of anti-aircraft artillery were nearly three-fifths below the 1969 level. On the other hand, ammunition imports increased substantially in 1970 and comprised approximately two-thirds the total value of military imports, compared to about one-third in 1969 (see Table 2). Ground forces equipment accounted for about one-sixth of the total value of military imports during 1970, while the remaining one-sixth consisted of small amounts of air defense equipment and other military assistance, including trucks.

4. During 1970, for the first time since 1964, Communist China supplied more military aid than the USSR. Communist Chinese military aid to North Vietnam during 1970 was valued at \$85 million, slightly more than one-half the total. The USSR sent \$70 million of military equipment and ammunition to North Vietnam. East European countries and North Korea contributed negligible amounts of military aid to North Vietnam, mostly in the form of small arms, grenades, mortars, and trucks for military use. The increased share of Communist Chinese military aid reflects the technical capabilities of the donor countries and North Vietnam's changing needs. During the bombing years the Soviet Union was the main supplier of North Vietnam's air defense equipment. In 1967, the year of the most intensive US bombing of North Vietnam, the USSR supplied over three-quarters of the military aid. However, the bombing halt over North Vietnam in 1968 reduced the need for air defense equipment and strengthened China's role as the main supplier of ground forces equipment.

1. Values are given in Soviet foreign trade prices, the list prices charged for military hardware and ammunition by the USSR under its aid agreements with non-Communist countries. They are generally lower than US costs, the principal exceptions being ammunition and small arms.

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SECRETAmmunition and Missiles

5. Ammunition imports into North Vietnam during 1970 increased to \$102 million, almost 40% higher than the 1969 total of \$74 million. The increased ammunition imports were needed to meet expanded requirements related to the widening of the war into Cambodia and the heavier consumption and losses of ammunition due to air strikes in southern Laos. However, the value of ammunition imports during 1970 was still less than one-half the average level maintained during the period 1965-68 when extremely heavy imports were needed for the antiaircraft artillery defenses within North Vietnam. During 1970 an estimated 25,500 metric tons of ammunition for small arms, field artillery, and antiaircraft weapons were received, compared to 18,000 metric tons in 1969. Communist China supplied 13,000 metric tons, the USSR supplied 12,000, and East European countries and North Korea the remaining 500 tons (see Table 3).

6. Deliveries of SA-2 replacement missiles are estimated to have declined to 100 in 1970, valued at \$3 million, compared to estimated deliveries of 200 missiles in 1969 and 1,135 in 1968. Most of the missiles were fired at US aircraft over North Vietnam, but occasionally missiles were fired at US aircraft in Laos flying close to North Vietnam's border. No new SAM firing battalions were identified.

Ground Forces Equipment

7. Imports of ground forces equipment for North Vietnamese forces and their allies were estimated at \$28 million during 1970, less than half of the peak of \$57 million in 1969, and below the 1968 and 1967 levels of \$34 million and \$36 million, respectively. The lower deliveries estimated for 1970 reflect decreased requirements following the extremely heavy deliveries in 1969. An estimated 190,000 individual weapons were imported during 1970, including the 7.62-mm family of modern weapons - about 10% less than 1969. Approximately 1,300 crew-served weapons are estimated to have been received during the year, including recoilless rifles and rocket launchers - a decrease of about 60% below the 1969 level, reflecting the continued trend away from large-scale operations during 1970.

8. Of the 190,000 individual weapons estimated to have been received during 1970, about 100,000 were needed to equip troops in North Vietnam preparing to infiltrate to South Vietnam. Another 60,000 individual weapons were needed to replace those captured by allied forces in South Vietnam. Normal attrition, plus losses due to allied air operations throughout Indochina, would account for the imports of the remaining weapons.

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25X1 9. Only \$9 million in air defense equipment was imported into North Vietnam during 1970, compared to \$77 million in 1969. The sharp decline was caused primarily by the halt in jet fighter imports in 1970 following the 1969 imports of 87 MIG-19s and MIG-21s valued at \$61 million, which had boosted North Vietnam's inventory to over 260 jet fighters. Air defense aid was also reduced by the low level of imports of antiaircraft weapons. During 1970, 360 antiaircraft weapons with a value of \$4 million were imported, compared to about 900 weapons in 1969 valued at \$10 million. The antiaircraft weapons received during 1970 were needed to replace those weapons destroyed by air strikes in Indochina and to establish at least minimal air defenses in northeastern Cambodia. Radar imports [] were valued at \$5 million, slightly less than in 1969. No fire control radar are known to have been deployed outside North Vietnam during 1970.

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25X1 10. Although North Vietnam's jet fighter inventory did not increase, 22 MIG-19s and 24 MIG-21s which had been stationed in Yunnani airfield in China were transferred to Yen Bai airfield in North Vietnam [] This was the first time that all 32 MIG-19s given to North Vietnam by Communist China in March 1969 were deployed in North Vietnam. The 24 MIG-21s increased the number of these aircraft stationed within North Vietnam to 86, a record high for this advanced jet fighter. The reason for this transfer is not clear.

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Other Military Assistance

11. Other military assistance to North Vietnam during 1970 included the delivery of over 3,000 trucks to the North Vietnamese armed forces. Additional trucks imported by North Vietnam during 1970 but not assigned to military units are not included in our estimates of military aid.

12. Four L-29 jet-trainers and two AN-24 medium transports were also delivered to North Vietnam during 1970. The appearance of four L-29 basic trainers may presage the establishment of a basic flight training course in North Vietnam. Previously, basic training of North Vietnamese pilots had taken place in the USSR and probably in Communist China. These aircraft have no fighter capability. The AN-24 transports have been used previously for diplomatic travel outside the country and logistics missions

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within North Vietnam. The additional two transport aircraft increase North Vietnam's capabilities in these fields and could also lead to renewed civil air service on a limited basis.

Conclusions

13. Military aid to North Vietnam during 1970 continued the downward trend which began in 1968. Military aid was valued at \$155 million, about two-thirds the 1969 level and only two-fifths the 1968 level. Over five-sixths of the military aid during 1970 consisted of ammunition and ground forces equipment. The sharp decline in imports of air defense equipment was caused primarily by a halt in jet fighter imports. No heavy armor or naval craft imports were observed.

14. Ammunition and ground forces equipment accounted for a larger share of military aid in 1970 than in previous years and estimated imports of these items are subject to wider margins of error than is the case for larger items such as aircraft and naval craft. Thus the estimated total value of military aid deliveries to North Vietnam in 1970 is subject to a greater range of error, in percentage terms at least, than estimates for past years.

15. Communist China became the major donor of military aid in 1970 for the first time since the escalation of hostilities in 1965 because a higher share of aid consisted of ammunition and ground forces equipment of which China is the major supplier. The decreased role of the USSR resulted from the changing needs of the North Vietnamese rather than unwillingness or inability of the USSR to supply military aid. Military imports from other Communist countries continued to be negligible.

16. North Vietnam is capable of producing only small quantities of ammunition, mortars, and other ground forces equipment, and is, therefore, almost entirely dependent on other Communist countries for equipment to wage the war. Military aid in 1971 may be somewhat higher than the low level in 1970. An intensification of ground fighting during 1971 would necessitate increased imports of ammunition and ground forces equipment. Imports of air defense equipment may also increase for fear of a resumption of US bombing. Military aid agreements were signed with Communist China and the USSR in October 1970, assuring the continuation of aid during 1971. On 12 February 1971 Communist China signed a supplementary military aid agreement for 1971, possibly in response to the ARVN incursion into Laos just four days before, on 8 February.

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Table 1

Estimated Communist Military Deliveries to North Vietnam a/

	Million US \$							
	<u>1954-64</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>Total</u>
USSR	70	210	360	505	290	120	70	1,625
Communist China	70	60	95	145	100	105	85	660
Eastern Europe	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	5 <u>b/</u>
<u>Total c/</u>	140	270	455	650	390	225	155	2,290

a. The data refer exclusively to combat materiel; they exclude aid designed for war-support purposes. Values are given in Soviet foreign trade prices, the list prices charged for military hardware and ammunition by the USSR under its aid agreements with non-Communist countries.

b. The cumulative value of deliveries from Eastern Europe during 1954-70 is estimated at \$5 million.

c. Negligible amounts of military aid have also been received from North Korea, Cuba, and Mongolia since 1966.

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Table 2

Soviet and Chinese Military Aid Deliveries to North Vietnam
by Major Type of Equipment

	Million US \$											
	1965		1966		1967		1968		1969		1970	
	USSR	China	USSR	China	USSR	China	USSR	China	USSR	China	USSR	China
Ammunition	70	33	164	41	275	94	164	62	37	37	49	53
Missiles	6	0	33	0	120	0	34	0	6	0	3	0
Air defense equipment <i>a/</i>	118	10	137	13	95	20	81	7	60	17	5	4
Naval craft	0	2	0	2	0	4	Negl.	1	Negl.	0	0	0
Ground forces equipment	7	11	4	35	11	25	4	30	9	48	4	24
Other	7	3	20	2	4	4	5	2	7	1	10	6
<i>Total b/</i>	210	60	360	95	505	145	290	100	120	105	70	85

a. Jet fighter aircraft are included under air defense equipment.

b. Because of rounding, components may not add to the totals shown.

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Table 3

Military Equipment Delivered to North Vietnam
by the USSR and Communist China During 1970

	USSR		Communist China	
	Quantity (Units)	At Soviet Foreign Trade Prices (Million US \$)	Quantity (Units)	At Soviet Foreign Trade Prices (Million US \$)
<i>Total value a/</i>	...	70	...	85
SAM missile systems	...	3	...	0
Replacement missiles	100	3	0	0
Aircraft	...	3	...	0
L-29 trainer	4	1	0	0
AN-24 transport	2	2	0	0
Artillery	...	3	...	3
85-mm antiaircraft artillery	10	Negl.	0	0
57-mm antiaircraft artillery	40	1	40	1
37-mm antiaircraft artillery	120	1	110	1
14.5-mm antiaircraft artillery	0	0	40	Negl.
Field artillery (75-152-mm)	30	1	45	1
Radar	...	3	...	2
Trucks and other vehicles b/ c/	1,430	7	1,200	6
Small arms and other infantry weapons d/	...	3	...	23
Ammunition (metric tons) c/	12,000	49	13,000	53

a. Because of rounding, components may not add to total value shown.

b. Estimates of vehicles assigned to the armed forces.

c. In addition, about 400 trucks and 500 tons of ammunition were delivered from East European countries and North Korea.

d. All mortars are included under infantry weapons.

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